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THERE IS POWER IN YOUR MIND

A Series of Four Lessons Devoted to:

- I. PRINCIPALS OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING III. DEVELOPING CREATIVE ABILITY
- II. DEVELOPING MENTAL STRENGTH IV. DEVELOPING MENTAL HEALTH



LESSON II.

Mayan Revelation Number 280

DEVELOPING MENTAL STRENGTH

Clarify Your Image of the Person You Can Become
Eliminate the Useless
Use Your Resiliency
Grow Into Maturity
Put Your Roots Deep Into Faith
Make a Personal Check-Up

Beloved Perfector:

We now approach the second Lesson in the series devoted to the general theme: THERE IS POWER IN YOUR MIND. We have studied the principles of effective learning. Now we will seek to apply their laws in such a way that we will increase our mental strength.

Each of us would like the ability to work efficiently. We also want to possess a radiant personality - to be the kind of person who brings joy and inspiration to our associates. We earnestly desire power to accomplish whatever task is before us; but we also want to be successful in the business of living. This involves skill in handling human relationships, which, in turn, involves skill in dealing with ourselves.

Where shall a man or woman look for the key to self-mastery? What determines whether he or she is sad or happy, weak or strong? The Bible tells us:

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7)

It is foolish to believe that the ability to succeed depends upon physical fitness, educational advantages, and material resources. While these usually prove to be assets, a person can allow either adverse circumstances or personal limitations to spark an effort that will lift him to unusual heights in his chosen field. When this happens a boy of only average intelligence becomes a more successful business man than someone who has a photographic memory; while the girl with little natural beauty develops such a charming personality that she becomes the most popular girl with her crowd; and an older person who is bent in body displays such gaiety of spirit that people of all ages delight in his company. By the power of the mind and the will one can surmount handicaps.

Our sources of strength are seldom used to their full capacity. There are reserves within our minds that can be tapped when we have the wisdom to find them and the determination to use them to shape our future.

The man or woman you can become is not determined merely by your natural endowments. Your destiny does not depend solely upon your physical heritage, your early environment, and the situation in which you now are placed. God has given to you the power to rise above limitations. Sometimes you should use your intelligence to find a way to remove the impediments to your progress. At other times you will need to seek for wisdom beyond your own. As you accept God's guidance and help you will discover how you can surmount the obstacles that are seemingly impossible to remove from your path.

You can be serene and cheerful when you are battling adversity. You can be mentally strong even when you are physically weak. You can have courage and fortitude even if you should become bedfast. You can develop mental and spiritual strength - strength that will enable you to live triumphantly under all circumstances. Earnestly pray:

PRAYER

Dear Father, I thank Thee for the promise that Thou art always with me. Open my mind to Thy divine wisdom. Help me to comprehend Thy laws and to apply them to my daily living. Make me receptive to the truths of this Lesson that I may see how to walk more steadfastly and how to serve Thee more ably. In the Master's name I pray, Amen.



CLARIFY YOUR IMAGE OF THE PERSON YOU CAN BECOME

The Greek God, Atlas, was portrayed as one who had enormous muscles and phenomenal strength - strength enough to carry the world on his shoulders.

In our generation the name "Atlas" was given to the circus strong-man who had chest and shoulder muscles of extraordinary size and power. He had developed

these muscles by lifting heavier and heavier weights, until he could hold high above his head a beam which would have crushed the ordinary man. His remarkable physical strength was not bestowed upon him. It came from lifting greater and ever greater burdens.

You and I have little desire to possess muscles like those of Atlas, but we can learn something from his exploits. Certainly many of us would benefit from the type of exercises that build up physical strength. Even more essential to our total well-being are the practices that promote the mental strength so sorely needed if we are to adequately cope with the varied responsibilities each day brings, and if we are to maintain poise and calm in times of stress.

In your effort to do this it is well to begin by clarifying your image of the person whom you desire to become. The importance of this was stressed in the Lesson on PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE LEARNING.

As you hold before you a picture of the man or woman whom you would like to be, you are prompted to think, and say, and do the things that will help you to become like your ideal. Your standards profoundly affect your behavior.

Shakespeare declared: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." (Hamlet, Act II)

If you think evil thoughts you will be drawn toward evil. But if you think lofty thoughts you will be inclined to perform noble deeds. If you dwell upon your infirmities you become more and more bound by them. But if, with vision and determination, you keep before you the image of the superior person you can become, both your conscious and subconscious mind works to lift you to a higher level of living. You have greater dexterity. You respond more quickly to an impulse to help others. You gain more satisfaction from your work and from all your social contacts.

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ELIMINATE THE USELESS

Of all the creatures God has created, man alone has the power to rationalize, and evaluate, and worship. Unfortunately, men and women all too frequently neglect this unique blessing. At times they let contemplation become a destructive force in their lives.

Our last Lesson stressed the importance of shaking off ideas that have no value - of wiping from our minds all that drains our energy and destroys our peace and happiness. If a person is to make advances in any field of endeavor, it is wise for him to eliminate anything that is distracting or useless.

As you strive to develop mental strength, push aside irritating thoughts and gnawing worries. When these take possession of your mind you cannot think with clarity about matters that should have your attention.

Take a close look now at two attitudes that frequently cause useless thinking. No doubt you could name many more, but surely you would include a sense of inferiority and fear of failure. As you discover how you can best deal with these

attitudes you should be able to grasp basic principles that will be beneficial if you put forth an effort to break any thought-habit that is detrimental to your mental growth.

First see how to cope with a sense of inferiority. Have you ever been inclined to think that you are a failure? If so, don't assume that this idea distresses you alone. An accurate poll of people's emotions - provided we could get one - would reveal that a sense of inferiority has at some time plagued most of us. In some cases it has produced hours of torture. In many lives it has brought years of misery. It is one of the primary causes of psychosomatic and mental illnesses.

In what forms do thoughts of inferiority assail us? And how shall we meet them when they come?

A student fails his mathematics examination. Then he is disturbed by the thought, "I'm not as bright as Jim or Tom." This may tempt him to deceive himself and his family with alibis, saying: "Our teacher is poor." Or, "The test wasn't fair." If he refuses to be honest with himself he weakens the fiber of his being. But he can realistically face his failure, saying: "I didn't study very hard, and I must 'grind' if I am to pass this course." Or he can say to himself: "I'll do my best, but perhaps mathematics is not my field. I did better than Jim in English. If I can succeed at something, why should I think so poorly of myself?" The student's attitude toward his failure will determine whether the experience makes him a weaker person, or whether it contributes to his mental growth.

So it is in your life. Try as you will to improve your scholastic grades, or your business, or your social standing, some disappointments are sure to come. When they do, don't hide behind excuses. Be honest with yourself and with others. Then evaluate your assets. Become so interested in using the talents you do have that useless regrets are soon crowded out of your mind. This practice will further your growth and development.

Fear of failure may stem from weakness, real or imaginary. It can prompt a person to run from reality, or it can prompt him to supreme effort. Look at one example of how an inferiority complex stimulated a boy's mind and efforts:

Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche was a frail youth, of highly sensitive nature. He was taunted by his schoolmates. They called him "the little minister." He was effeminate and lacking in physical skills. After a fall from a horse he was discharged from military service and began his studies of philosophy. In time he developed the superman doctrine. While this sprang from over-compensation, and certainly is not praiseworthy, the success of Nietzsche shows how thoughts can transform a feeble and frightened boy into a man of strength. As Nietzsche propounded the doctrine of self-assertion and the "will to power", he threw off his own fear of failure. He became dynamic.

If you long to compensate for some weakness, or to dispel fear by self-confidence, know that this is possible. Even if you have experienced several set-backs, even if you have failed more than once to make the progress you desire, that does not mean that you are defeated. Mental growth is possible at any age, and under all circumstances. Do not give up. Try again and again.

USE YOUR RESILIENCY

The mighty sequoias are not destroyed by injury, or drought, or fire. Their growth is retarded, as can be traced when the trees are cut for timber; but their sap forms a gum that covers and heals their wounds. They have the ability to put forth new growth when they are mutilated.

God has made man so that he also has the remarkable ability to recover from injury or stress. He has resiliency. If one lung is destroyed the other lung enlarges until it is able to do the work of two. When a man is forced to labor in high altitudes, where the oxygen supply is thin, his heart beats faster, thereby increasing the red corpuscle count and maintaining his body balance. When a child's legs are paralyzed and he must walk on crutches he gradually develops powerful arm and shoulder muscles. Nature has a way of helping men and women to compensate for their physical weaknesses.

It is no less true that we can develop mental strength sufficient to rise above hazards that threaten to cripple us. We can exercise our mental muscles and develop courage and fortitude. When a child or loved one is stricken with illness we exhibit amazing patience. When we become caught up in some humanitarian endeavor we are endowed with endurance beyond our own.

Of Frederick D. Maurice, a great benefactor of the past century, a friend said: "He always impressed me as a man who was naturally weak in his will, but an iron will seemed to work through him."

When Franklin D. Roosevelt's body was wasted by poliomyelitis, despair might have chased him into a shell of immobility and introspection. But by holding his head high, and accepting the encouragement offered by his wife and friends, he found the will to carry on his work. He not only bounced back from the depths to which he had been knocked, he let suffering toughen him, and then he rose to heroic heights.

Your battles may be fought on a smaller scale. But you, too, need not merely bear up under hardship. By the power of your mind and spirit you can grow strong through adversity.

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GROW INTO MATURITY

Maturity comes as we gain the wisdom to see our problems in perspective and to deal with them courageously. With each passing year you can get more and more satisfaction from life if you will keep growing mentally.

Stagnation is symbolic of death. If we see no buds on a plant we know it will not live long. Likewise, our minds soon shrivel up if we do not seek new insights.

Happiness is not something that is given to you. It comes as you learn to intelligently respond to the challenge of each day. When you arrive in pleasant places, enjoy them to the fullest. When you are caught in a dilemma, either solve it, or rise above it.

Ralph Waldo Emerson found that:

"In the mud and scum of things,

There's always, always, something sings."

Our faculty for finding joy, for keeping a lilt in the spirit even amid disaster, should be keener as we grow older. This quality of mind does not come by chance, but by desire, plus sustained practice. Let us look at some of the factors in Emerson's life that helped shape his thinking.

First, there was the influence of his home. Emerson was one of a large family, guided by a widowed mother. She trained the children in the habit of "going without", of being satisfied with frugal living and humble pleasures.

Second, there was his eagerness for study. Young Waldo often had his nose in a book. In later years his private library was the finest in intellectual Concord. Louisa May Alcott said, "When the book mania fell upon me at fifteen, I used to venture into Mr. Emerson's library and ask what I should read, never conscious of the audacity of my demand, so genial was my welcome. His kind hand opened to me the riches of Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, and Carlyle; and I gratefully recall the sweet patience with which he led me round the book-lined room till 'the new and very interesting book' was found."

This quote reveals that Emerson possessed a longing not only to gain wisdom for himself, but to share it with others. And by "wisdom" he did not think of book-learning alone. Louisa Alcott also left a record of the many happy hours which she spent with the little Emersons in their father's barn when "The illustrious father was our playfellow." He often took the neighborhood children for rides in his haywagon, and for walks in the woods.

His profound interest in others saved Emerson - as it will save us - from absorption in himself, and in his own ideas and problems. He wrote: "Most of the shadows of this life are caused by standing in our own sunshine."

Emerson, as you perhaps know, had plenty of shadows in his life. His ill health and poor eyesight prevented him from taking the regular theological course. Here we see an example of how a difficulty can become a source of stimulation. Certainly his frailty not only curtailed normal activity, but provided added time for meditation. Thoughts that might have wandered into channels of self-pity were directed to the search for profound truth. They were the seed-bed for the philosophy that we can transcend the world of things, that we can live above the annoying and the hum-drum.

Finally, Emerson listened to others. He conversed not only with Thoreau, but with his neighbors. He was not too wrapped up in his own concepts to be attentive to their words. Ralph Waldo Emerson did not reach his high conclusions alone. In fellowship with others he achieved the intellectual and emotional maturity that have made his words treasured by succeeding generations.

As you seek to grow into maturity:

1. Learn to "do without".

2. Study eagerly.
3. Share whatever wisdom you gain.
4. Transcend the annoying and the hum-drum.

With the passing years be willing to leave behind some of the amusements and satisfactions of youth. Prepare yourself for the loss of health, loved-ones, and friends. Seek every day to find true joy in success, and to bravely face disappointment as it comes - neither anticipating trouble, nor being overwhelmed by it.

You can not only learn how to meet good fortune with gladness and to accept honor with modesty; but also how to endure hardships with courage, and to match grief with faith.

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PUT YOUR ROOTS DEEP INTO FAITH

The Psalmist tells us (in the First Psalm) that a man is happy who keeps company with godly people and does not scorn the wisdom handed down through the ages. He finds his delight in living in accord with God's laws.

"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

If the need to seek a place for meditation was great in ancient times, it is even more urgent in our age. Radio and television disturb the silence. It often is difficult to find a quiet spot.

We might be embarrassed if we were forced to answer the question: "How many minutes did you spend today in meditation and prayer?"

We desire the rewards of faith, while hesitating to pay the price necessary to attain them. But if we would be strong we must be sustained by the living water of our faith. We need to take time for private and group worship. We grow in strength through prayer as we reach deep into God's limitless power.

Take time to do this and you will be:

"Like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."
(Psalm I:3)

Plant your "roots" firmly in the life-giving streams of Divine Law and Love. Patiently, day after day, think about God's purpose for your life. Then you will grow in strength, not all at once, but "in season" - as a gradual development. The fruits of your meditation will be manifest in your life.



MAKE A PERSONAL CHECK-UP

There is value in making a personal check-up to see if one is showing signs of growth. How would you rate yourself on the following questions?

- * Do you meet disappointment more calmly than you did five years ago?
- * Do you have fewer prejudices?
- * Do you react less violently to annoying people and situations?
- * Do you think more of the happiness of others, and dwell less upon your own desires?
- * Can you keep happily busy when hampered by a physical incapacity?
- * Do you find satisfaction in simple pleasures?
- * Are you becoming more aware each day of the sustaining power that is available from God, your Father?

In conclusion:

Bear in mind that, while there comes a time when you reach your maximum physical efficiency, there are no limits to your mental growth. Expose yourself daily to fresh knowledge and insight. Then new interests and satisfactions will enrich your life.

Acquire new knowledge and apply it.

Learn new skills and find joy in using them.

Develop nobler attitudes as you spend more time dwelling on life's verities.

Put your roots down deep into the streams of faith so you will keep growing in wisdom and strength.



AFFIRMATION

By study and meditation I can and will grow in mental strength day by day.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.